

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5475
INFO AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
USMISSION USBERLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 06984

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT--MUCH OMITTED PARAS THREE,
FOUR, FIVE)

E.O.11652:GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, GE
SUBJECT: GDR SECURITY POLICE ARREST ECONOMIC WRITER
- AS SPY

REF: STATE 203352

1. SUMMARY: THE GDR HAS ARRESTED A NEW DISSIDENT FIGURE
ON CHARGES OF "INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES" ON BEHALF OF
THE FRG. RUDOLF BAHRO, A FACTORY SUPERVISOR AND SED
PARTY MEMBER, HAS WRITTEN A BOOK SHARPLY CRITICAL OF
THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIALISM IN THE SOVIET BLOC AND CALLING
FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ORGANIZED MARXIST OPPOSITION
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IN THE GDR. THE BOOK WILL SOON BE PUBLISHED IN THE WEST
BUT EXCERPTS APPEARED IN THE ISSUE OF DER SPIEGEL WHICH
APPEARED MONDAY AUGUST 22. BAHRO HAS ALSO GIVEN INTERVIEWS
TO WEST BERLIN TELEVISION. END SUMMARY.

2. UNDER THE TITLE, "ANOTHER SPY OF THE FRG SECRET SERVICE
ARRESTED," NEUES DEUTSCHLAND ANNOUNCED TERSELY ON AUGUST 25

THAT THE GDR HAD ARRESTED TWO PERSONS ON SUSPICION OF ESPIONAGE. ONE, RUDOLF BAHRO, ARRESTED AUGUST 23, MAY BECOME THE FOCUS OF A NEW CONTROVERSY ON THE TREATMENT OF DISSIDENTS IN THE GDR. ALTHOUGH VERY LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT BAHRO, THE INFORMATION CONTAINED REFTTEL AND IN THE WESTERN PRESS IS CONSISTENT WITH WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED. BAHRO IS A FORTY-ONE YEAR OLD FORMER DIVISION CHIEF IN AN EAST BERLIN RUBBER FACTORY AND A LONG-TIME SED PARTY MEMBER. HIS IMMEDIATE CLAIM TO FAME, AND TO THE ATTENTION OF THE GDR STATE SECURITY SERVICE, IS HIS AUTHORSHIP OF A BOOK SHARPLY CRITICAL ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ORGANIZED OPPOSITION WITHIN THE .SOCIALIST PARTY STRUCTURE OF THE GDR.

3. THE BOOK IS ENTITLED, "THE ALTERNATIVE--A CRITIQUE OF REAL EXISTING SOCIALISM" AND WILL BE PUBLISHED IN WEST GERMANY SEPTEMBER 5. HOWEVER, WE HAVE LEARNED THAT BAHRO REPRODUCED TWO HUNDRED COPIES OF THE MANUSCRIPT ON HIS OWN AND DISTRIBUTED THEM ANONYMOUSLY WITHIN THE GDR LAST SPRING. HE IN PARTICULAR SENT COPIES TO NUMEROUS ELEMENTS WITHIN THE RULING SED PARTY AND EVIDENTLY THEN WAITED FOR SOME KIND OF REACTION. .WHEN NONE DEVELOPED HE SUBMITTED THE MANUSCRIPT TO THE GDR STATE PUBLISHING HOUSE, WAS REJECTED AND THEN CONTACTED THE PUBLISHING HOUSE OF THE WEST GERMAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION TO ARRANGE FOR ITS PUBLICATION
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IN THE WEST. HE ALSO RECENTLY TAPED TWO INTERVIEWS FOR WEST BERLIN TELEVISION STATIONS (WHICH ARE RECEIVED IN EAST BERLIN) AND AUTHORIZED DER SPIEGEL TO PUBLISH EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK. ACCORDING TO A WEST BERLIN SOURCE, THE EXISTENCE OF THE BOOK AND THE NAME OF ITS AUTHOR BECAME GENERALLY KNOWN ON 21 AUGUST. THE ISSUE OF DER SPIEGEL CONTAINING PORTIONS OF THE TEXT APPEARED AUGUST 22 AND BAHRO WAS ARRESTED AUGUST 23. THEREFORE, WHILE THE EXISTENCE OF THE BOOK HAD BEEN KNOWN TO GDR AUTHORITIES FOR SOME TIME THE REGIME'S REACTION TO BAHRO'S PUBLIC DISCLOSURE IN THE WEST WAS ALMOST IMMEDIATE.

4. A WEST BERLIN SOURCE WHO HAS SEEN AN ADVANCE COPY OF THE BOOK DESCRIBES IT AS A "BRILLIANT" CRITICISM OF THE SOCIALIST SYSTEM AS IT HAS DEVELOPED IN THE USSR AND EASTERN EUROPE. ACCORDING TO THIS SOURCE, THE MAIN THRUST OF BAHRO'S BOOK, WHICH HE SPENT SEVERAL YEARS WRITING, IS THAT THE USSR AND OTHER EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAVE DEVELOPED "INDUSTRIAL DESPOTISMS" IN WHICH THE COMMUNIST PARTY STRUCTURES HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY BUREAUCRATIC AND IN NEED OF REFORM. THE BOOK IS EVIDENTLY PARTICULARLY HARSH IN ITS CRITICISM OF THESE

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE USSR. BAHRO CALLS FOR A RENEWAL OF BASIC MARXIST MOTIVATION AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, FOR THE CREATION OF A "MARXIST OPPOSITON IN THE GDR." INTERESTINGLY, HOWEVER, DESPITE BAHRO'S POINTED CRITICISM OF HOW SOCIALISM HAS DEVELOPED IN THE USSR, HE APPARENTLY CONCEDES THAT SOCIALISM COULD COME TO GERMANY ONLY BY SOVIET IMPOSITION.

5. BAHRO'S CRITICISM OF THE INDUSTRIAL AND BUREAUCRATIC CHARACTER OF THE GDR IS PARTICULARLY INTERESTING SINCE HE IS HIMSELF AN ELEMENT OF THAT SYSTEM. HE WAS, UNTIL RECENTLY, A DIVISION CHIEF IN CHARGE OF SCIENTIFIC WORK ORGANIZATION IN AN EAST BERLIN RUBBER PLANT AND IS A GRADUATE OF HUMBOLDT UNIVERSITY. HE HAS BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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A MEMBER OF THE RULING SED PARTY FOR TWENTY-THREE YEARS AND HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN PARTY AFFAIRS SINCE HIS STUDENT DAYS.HIS WRITING BACKGROUND INCLUDES THE EDITORSHIP OF A UNIVERSITY NEWSPAPER IN GREIFSWALD AND A PERIOD (1966-67) AS AN ASSISTANT CHIEF EDITOR OF FORUM, A MAGAZINE PUBLISHED BY THE FREE GERMAN YOUTH ORGANIZATION (FDJ) FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG INTELLECTUALS. INTERESTINGLY, AT THAT TIME BAHRO HAD THE REPUTATION OF BEING A VERY HARDLINE MARXIST AND WAS EVIDENTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HARSH CRITICISM OF LEADING POET GUENTER KUNERT WHICH APPEARED IN FORUM.

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6. BASED ON OUR SOURCE'S CHARACTERIZATION, THE NATURE OF BAHRO'S SUGGESTIONS OBVIOUSLY STRIKES AT THE VERY HEART OF THE EAST GERMAN AND SOVIET SYSTEMS. WHILE THE GDR CAREFULLY PRESERVES THE EXISTENCE OF FOUR TECHNICALLY NON-MARXIST JUNIOR PARTIES IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THE APPEARANCE OF AN OPEN POLITICAL SYSTEM IN WHICH A "LOYAL OPPOSITION" IS PERMITTED, NOTHING COULD BE LESS WELCOME TO THE SED LEADERSHIP THAN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ORGANIZED OPPOSITION WITHIN THE MARXIST STRUCTURE. IN THIS REGARD BAHRO IS A RATHER PECULIAR, SYSTEM. HE DOES NOT, SO FAR AS WE CAN SEE, CALL FOR "MANY ROADS TO SOCIALISM" ALONG YUGOSLAV OR EURO-COMMUNIST LINES. IN FACT, IN TERMS OF THE EXISTING ORTHODOXY OF THE SOVIET SYSTEM BAHRO'S IS THE ULTIMATE HERESY, THE DESIRE FOR WHAT WOULD AMOUNT TO A SECOND CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMUNIST PARTY TO CHALLENGE AND THEREBY REFORM THE EXISTING MARXIST POWER STRUCTURE.

7. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER BAHRO'S CRITICISMS OF THE GDR SYSTEM WILL STRIKE A RESPONSIVE CHORD WITHIN EAST GERMAN SOCIETY OR WHETHER HIS HIGHLY UNORTHODOX POINT OF VIEW WILL MERELY FALL BY THE WAYSIDE. IT IS ALSO NOT CLEAR WHAT REPERCUSSIONS HIS ARREST WILL HAVE AMONG INTELLECTUAL CIRCLES HERE WHICH ARE ALREADY DISCOURAGED OVER THE REGIME'S CULTURAL POLICIES. FROM THE CONSIDERABLE COVERAGE GIVEN TO HIS ARREST IN THE WEST GERMAN PRESS, IT IS LIKELY THAT HE WILL BECOME AT LEAST SOMETHING OF A CAUSE CELEBRE IN THE WESTERN MEDIA, BUT IT IS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN THAT THIS WILL ALSO BE THE CASE WITHIN EAST GERMAN DISSIDENT CIRCLES OF SOCIETY AS A WHOLE. BAHRO IS ANYTHING BUT A MEMBER OF THE GROUP OF GDR DISSIDENTS WHO HAVE ATTRACTED ATTENTION IN THE LAST FEW YEARS AND IN FACT HAS UNTIL THIS WEEK BEEN A VIRTUAL UNKNOWN. CONTRARY TO BEING AN ARTIST, POET, SINGER OR WRITER, HE IS PRECISELY THE KIND OF TECHNICIAN/PARTY WORKER WHOSE LOYALTY IS ESSENTIAL TO THE SOCIALIST STATE SYSTEM.

8. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN THE EMBASSY'S MEMORY THAT THE GDR HAS LEVELED ESPIONAGE CHARGES AGAINST ONE OF ITS DISSIDENTS. NORMALLY DISSIDENTS ARE CHARGED, IF AT ALL, WITH SUCH CRIMES AS LIBELING THE STATE OR ARE ENCOURAGED BY VARIOUS MEANS TO EMIGRATE. THE REASON FOR THE PARTICULARLY SWIFT AND BRUTAL REACTION BY THE AUTHORITIES IN THIS CASE IS NOT CLEAR. IT MAY BE A CONSIDERED RESPONSE TO THE PARTICULARLY HERETICAL CHARACTER OF HIS THESES (WHICH IN THEIR OWN WAY ARE AS CHALLENGING TO THE SOVIET SYSTEM AS LUTHER'S TO THE VATICAN). ALTERNATIVELY, IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT BAHRO WAS TOLERATED AS AN ECCENTRIC

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SO LONG AS HE KEPT HIS VIEWS IN HOUSE BUT WAS IMMEDIATELY SLAPPED DOWN WHEN HE WENT PUBLIC IN THE WEST. THE TIMING OF HIS APPEARANCE IN DER SPIEGEL AND ON WEST BERLIN TELEVISION WAS PARTICULARLY UNFORTUNATE FROM THE GDR POINT OF VIEW, COMING JUST BEFORE THE CELEBRATION OF ERICH HONECKER'S SIXTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY.

9. IN RESPONSE TO THE DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST FOR EMBASSY VIEWS ON THE WISDOM AND EFFICACY OF A SPOKESMAN DEPLORING OR EXPRESSING DISAPPROVAL OF THE ARREST, WE QUESTION WHETHER IT WOULD HAVE THE DESIRED EFFECT IN ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS HERE. WE NOTE IN THIS CONNECTION THAT THE BOOK, WHICH WE HAVE NOT SEEN, IS REPORTEDLY A FUNDAMENTAL ATTACK ON THE SOVIET AS WELL AS GDR SYSTEM. THEREFORE, ANY POSSIBLE PUBLIC STATEMENT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED NOT ONLY IN LIGHT OF US-GDR RELATIONS, BUT ALSO US-SOVIET RELATIONS, AND WASHINGTON IS IN A BETTER POSITION TO JUDGE THE POSSIBLE IMPACT OF A PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THESE RELATIONS. IN OUR VIEW, IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE AT THE PRESENT TIME NOT TO SAY ANYTHING PUBLICLY, SINCE WE KNOW SO LITTLE ABOUT BAHRO, THE BOOK, AND HIS ACTIVITIES. IF, HOWEVER, THE DEPARTMENT BELIEVES SOME STEP IS CALLED FOR, IN OUR VIEW IT WOULD BE FAR MORE EFFECTIVE TO EXPRESS OUR CONCERN IN PRIVATE CHANNELS RATHER THAN RESORT TO PUBLIC CONDEMNATION AT THIS TIME (PERHAPS AT THE EUR/CE DIRECTOR TO MONTAG LEVEL). IF THE DEPARTMENT PREFERS THE PRESS SPOKESMAN APPROACH ON AN IF-ASKED BASIS, WE WOULD RECOMMEND THAT HE GO NO FURTHER THAN THE PARA 3 Q&A FORMULATION IN THE REFTEL. BOLEN

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Message Attributes

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